1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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County Clare

farmers converge upon Ennis. In each case a center, whether a larger market town or one of the smaller villages, serves a natural area demarcated by the configuration of the land and the course of the roads.

In such natural regions, particularly in more remote and mountainous country, the roads determine the intercourse of the communities with one another. Today each focal point is joined with another by a motor road. As the roads wind out from the larger centers, shops come to be placed at the strategic crossroad; a public house springs up; perhaps a schoolhouse, a parochial house, a chapel of the parish, rise beside them. Nowadays creameries are put up at these or still other points along the roads, where they are most conveniently accessible to small and medium farms producing milk. Even more recently lorries have begun to come direct to the crossroad to pick up produce that once, before motor traffic, had to be carried by the farmers themselves all the way to town.

Plotting out the market areas of the towns and villages of the countryside reveals a characteristic of social and economic space even here where the deepest hinterlands are never more than a half-day's leisurely trip by horse and cart. Any list of customers plotted by residence around a minor center gives an area which extends considerably farther in the direction away from the nearest larger center than it does in the direction leading to it. The minor centers draw principally from the hinterlands behind them and their areas extend only a little way along the roads in the direction of the next larger center. Ennistymon in North Clare draws custom twelve miles to the north, but to the south its influence reaches only three miles up the valley of the Inagh River, where the region of the larger center, Ennis, begins. Ennis itself serves all Clare, and its own immediate area extends, to judge from the residences of the farmers who come to buy and sell in her markets, beyond Ennistymon

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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438 to the north and as far as Killadysert to the south. In the direction of Limerick, the metropolis of southwest Ireland, however, the influence of Ennis ends at Newmarket-on-Fergus, a scant five miles off.

491 Today the roads both great and small provide all-weather
494 routes for every kind of local traffic. They carry many lorries
496 and not a few buses in competition with the only local railroad — the small and winding West Clare Railroad, which joins Kilrush and Kilkee to Ennis and Limerick in the east, and Gort and Galway in the north, tapping Ennistymon and Corrofin on the way through, all this in the roundabout leisurely fashion of the earlier days of railroading.

491 The main roads are much more direct. They follow divides and occasionally cut right across high bog country. Today they negotiate bogs, which once would have prohibited any sort of transportation during wet weather, by dint of side ditches and high crowns of gravel and dirt. Over high country they have better foundations and wander in comparatively straight fashion through the country.

491 At various points along these main roads there are
653 branches today penetrating the countryside. These are rougher and simpler constructions of crushed stones taken from local quarries, leased by the County Council. The stone is broken by laborers and small farmers of the district through which the road runs. In the case of the smaller roads each landholder is responsible for the bit of the road that runs by his land. "Road metal," as the crushed stone is called, is spread during the late autumn, winter, or very early spring. When the weather is dry, in summer, a fine white dust rises after every vehicle. But in the rainy months of spring and winter the roads are soft and full of chuck holes, and new stones must be laid down. Then the heavy
[493] iron-tired carts of the farmers break them further and press them into the soft roadbeds.

The interlocking net of roads covering Clare high and low must have been fairly complete at an early period. In high country many of the roads were "famine roads," built to give relief during the "bad times." In lower, richer land they are older. They ran originally from one concentration of estates to another, reflecting the older social order. Even today there is still a considerable amount of new road building carried on by local authorities, opening up districts which formerly had little or no communication with the outside world. There are still many farmhouses and village clusters of farmhouses far away from any improved road in higher country. Their inhabitants rely on rough borheens and stony trails leading from the nearest road. Many such isolated houses were originally built in inaccessible parts of hills and bogs to keep their owners from the eyes of bog rangers and estate stewards and to hide them from the threat of eviction.

Today the roads are kept up by the county government and the state. The system of road labor is very old. Private contracts for stones, maintenance, and repair and gang work under county officials are still important sources of outside work for the farm communities and occasions of local relief important in county politics.

The small farmer today uses five principal methods of travel. Choice among these is determined by the nature of one's errand and the status of the traveler.

The motor car is the newest and most costly method of transport. Small farmers do not own motor cars. They hire them from the towns when occasion arises. The motor car is still in process of introduction into the Irish Free State. In the countryside it is used only in time of crisis and high ceremony. If a member of a farm family needs hospital attention, he is removed to the nearest hospital, either in a private motor car or in the free county ambulance. At a wedding and an important funeral a family may engage

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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493 two or three motor cars for important guests and the prin-
494 cipals. At election time the local political organizations of the national parties provide free transport to the polls for the old and lame. In all else the motor car is the mark of the townsman, either the produce-collector in his lorry or the man of influence on a jaunt.

493 Even at such times of high ceremony as weddings, funerals,
494 and elections the country people still use the horse and
554 trap or sidecar. This is the traditional mode of polite travel, and it retains its popularity today. The trap is used only by the whole family or by its adult farm-owning members. It is used only in connection with activities of importance which mark their own status and those to whom they travel. It is always used at funerals and marriages. It sometimes transports all the family in Sunday best to church. It is brought out to honor a visitor or announce the arrival or departure of a friend. And it is used occasionally on visits of state to the town. Sunday clothes always go with it. It would be a very big farmer who used the trap in all his trips to town.

493 The vehicle-of-all-work, and the one on which produce
494 goes to market and shop-bought goods come back, is the common two-wheeled cart. The farmers call it a "car." With the addition of side boards it becomes a "creel" and can carry small livestock, turf, and many another bulky object. Occasionally it appears on Sunday, but one never sees it in times of high ceremony such as in a funeral procession. It is the vehicle of everyday working life. Even the younger members of the family may use it sometimes in going about their work. But it is most often to be seen in the hands of the man of the house.

The ass and car, on the other hand, ordinarily has no such eminence. The donkey cart is a woman's vehicle. It takes her and her farm produce to and from the crossroad center. In a town market it is no accident that one can find the

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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ass-carts among the poultry sellers or with the pigs, but seldom in the corn or cattle markets.

Another modern vehicle has worked its way into farm life. The bicycle is used by all ages and both sexes. But in poorer districts it is principally used by adult men, especially among the smaller farmers. Children go on foot. The bicycle is an informal and individual means of conveyance, ideal for visiting, for the pursuits and pleasures of young men and women, and for quick trips to the local crossroad center.

Finally, the country people travel a great deal on foot. At work one travels nearly always on foot. Distances are short, and the vehicles one has are needed for carrying. On Sunday most people walk to mass, even where it means a long walk over the fields. In any procession of country life the majority of persons taking part are always afoot. In running petty errands to "friends," neighbors, and the local shop one goes on foot. Habit wears many paths across the fields in many directions. It makes one very expert at avoiding hazards of mud and wet. But nearly all foot journeys find the road soon or late.

To complete the picture of rural travel, one must add perforce two more vehicles. One is very new and just beginning to make its influence felt, though only on the main roads between the large cities and towns. This is the motor bus. Today a few persons have begun to travel beyond the market towns to the cities for their more important business, and in the movement lies much of one side of the picture of the decline of the middle-sized towns in rural Ireland. The other and last means of transport is the horse. Only adults among the country people ever ride him, either for sport or for transport. The horse is first a work animal, then a sporting beast. In either case he is the special care and interest of the adult man.

The methods of transport in the countryside are related

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Luogh is remote. It is nearly half a day's tramp along the roads from its market town, Ennistymon. Even Ennistymon is no metropolis. It is a sprawling village of 1200 people. Neither bus nor train runs between the two.

But Luogh is not entirely isolated by this remoteness. It does not entirely escape modernity. Pleasure-bent motorists from the cities drive through along the cliffs. One can see Atlantic liners standing-to just outside Galway Bay. Many of Luogh's farms have a horse-drawn mowing machine, out of an English steel works, and some of the houses own a mechanical cream separator, even though next door a wooden hand churn is still in use which looks no different from those found deep in the bogs.

But modern tools do not make the life of Luogh. They ease it perhaps, and work a slow effect. But in a short stay one cannot see that change. One's attention turns to the life into which these few strays of modernity find their way.

For Luogh is like many another community of small farms over Clare and southern and western Ireland. Some lie closer to urban centres, some are even more remote. Many are better off; some few are poorer. Some have kept the Irish language better; others have abandoned it altogether for the brogue. But they all have the 'sweet *blas*' of Gaelic still on their tongues and speak an idiom embedded in their common folk life.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

populated country, the district under consideration is practically isolated, and communication with other parts of the country is carried on by road or by sea. Mails and passengers are carried daily to and from Ballina and Belmullet by a good two-horse (Bianconi) stage-car; and a similar vehicle, an opposition venture, also makes the journey daily with passengers and light goods. The country beyond Belmullet is provided with mails twice weekly. Goods are conveyed by carts from Ballina, a distance of over forty miles, during the winter and spring, and large sailing boats are sometimes employed carrying heavy goods from Westport. But few wheeled-vehicles are used except by the better-to-do, and in the remoter parts hardly any are employed, turf, sea-weed, &c., being carried in cleaves or pardoges (panniers with movable bottoms, slung over the backs of horses or donkeys). The people, if poor, have to walk; those better off may ride to market. It is common for two to ride the one horse, a man in the saddle and a woman *en croupe*, or both equestrians may be women, in which case, sometimes, but very rarely, the woman in front may ride astride.

The main roads are pretty good, but many of the smaller ones are very little used, except at harvest time or when turf is being got in, and as a result are grass-grown and uneven. Some small fishing hamlets and outlying places are still unprovided with roads.

For water transport there are the sailing boats before mentioned, used for the conveyance of goods from Westport. The form of boat most in use is the curragh, which is manned by three men; it varies somewhat in pattern in different localities.

In the Mullet and the islands 142 curraghs are in use. Very few boats of other patterns are kept, as there are only three second-class boats (yawls), and about thirty third-class. At Portacloy there are about 30 curraghs.

The southern part of the peninsula and the islands obtain their turf supply by boat from Achill and Ballycroy.

V.—FOLK-LORE.

Although poor in so many other respects, Erris is particularly rich in folk-lore, many old customs, traditions, and beliefs, which have died out, or are dying elsewhere, still flourishing there. The legends and tales of the past and many old songs are still current, especially among the older people, who, however, will not readily communicate them to strangers, so that only a resident well acquainted with Irish

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

493 the block wheel was independently invented in north-western Europe, or at least adapted from the log roller as a native response to the novelty of the spoked wheel.

A feature of the Ulster slide-cars which distinguishes them both from Scots and Welsh examples and from most other slide-cars is the provision of separate wooden runners or 'shoes' which are pegged to the ends of the shafts and can be replaced when worn out. They have the effect of reducing somewhat the slope of the platform and its load. Formerly a special slide-car was kept for carrying corn, the sheaves being supported by a [171] hooped frame of osiers which finds parallels in Sweden and Finland. Another archaic feature was the harness, which was [492] constructed, until quite recent times, entirely of wood, straw and withies (Fig. 69).

Slide-cars, 'strange survivals from the twilight of history',[1] 171 are found not only in Highland Britain and the Baltic lands but 493 in many parts of east central Europe, in Siberia, China, Siam and the Indian Deccan. Such a distribution points to a dispersal in high antiquity, probably from western Asia. There is no direct archaeological evidence of ancient slide-cars but it has been plausibly argued that the well-known 'cart tracks' of Malta were made by slide-cars some 3,000 years ago.[2] This humble vehicle is well suited to simple societies, whose transport needs are few, and to country, especially hilly country, without made roads, where the wheel would be out of place.

In Ireland the wheel-car clings to the same districts as the 493 slide-car and serves much the same purpose, but it may occasionally be used for longer journeys by road, for example to take an animal to the fair. (Slide-cars are very injurious to roads and were driven off them by ordinances against their [494] use on the highways). On steep slopes the wheels, being secured to a rotating axle, act as a brake on each other. Measuring only some two feet in diameter, they are composed of three segments of wood dowelled together as in the oldest known Mesopotamian wheels, and shod with an iron hoop. They revolve under the car inside the shafts, so that the body must be raised to give clearance. It is supported by vertical struts morticed into the

[1] A. C. Haddon, *The Study of Man* (1898), 161.
[2] H. S. Gracie, *Antiquity* (1954), 91–98.